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## GENERAL SESSION

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### **INTERMODAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY ACT (ISTEA): A NEW WAY OF DOING BUSINESS**

I worked in central Florida for 17 years directing a regional planning council and, from my Florida experience, I want to comment on transportation and hurricanes. Regional planning councils in Florida were responsible for "doing the hurricane," if you want to use that term. We planned for hurricanes and we told people where they were going to hit. We were responsible for the evacuation and sheltering of people in the event of a hurricane. After Hurricane Andrew struck, my colleague, who ran the planning council in the Miami area, and I were patting ourselves on the back. I said, "Well, we did a great job on that, didn't we. We got the folks out, got them sheltered, had minimal deaths; our planning really worked out well." She responded, "Don't congratulate us too much because we missed a big point—what do we do and how do we serve the people after the storm?" We didn't even think about that. As she talked about what some of the problems were, she indicated that the most important item we missed was how we would transport people to necessary services and facilities. We had completely left that out of the process. I understand, however, that they are going to correct that for the future.

Transportation is a key component to our livelihood, whether it's in times of a disaster or in our own economic viability. That is why ISTEA is so important.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has a role in this so-called "ISTEA—a new way of doing business." My subtitle for that is, "Let's change direction." I'm going to ask you to change your thinking. With due respect for our colleagues at the federal level, I'm going to take a slightly different viewpoint, one in which I will try to indicate how this is going to work for you locally. We have in the MPOs the "new partner in planning." This creates a question, which I've already gotten answered and, to my delight, the answer is positive. The MPO is an old player, but it is new to being a partner to state and federal agencies. My question is: will the state and federal agencies let this partner in and let it in on an equal basis? The good news (after nine months) is, yes, they will. In fact, they are encouraging the MPO to be an active partner and they are accepting us as a new partner that is actively involved.

However, on occasion we drop back to the old way of doing things. At the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI), we recently went through a restructuring within the agency. One of the problems we had in doing this restructuring was that some of the people from the old days did not want to allow the new days to come forward. I won't comment on that. I see occasionally there is a linkage to the old, but I hope that we can get by it.

You are going to have to look to the MPO (you locally, and you nationally) for several things. The MPO is going to provide planning leadership, the MPO is going to provide intergovernmental leadership, the MPO is responsible for providing the intermodal leadership, and it also is responsible for providing the technical leadership. It must be the leader if ISTEA is going to work.

The key element will be whether or not people in our urban areas will change the way they travel today. If they do not, we will, in fact, fail. The MPO is a new partner, but it's going to have to be treated, not as a junior partner, not as a part-time partner, but as a full partner to the process, and possibly one of the key decision makers. The MPOs are where you are finally going to see some of the implementation planning that will have to occur. Implementation is the key to the act. Hopefully, we will put all of our good words out among our people who have to travel for pleasure and work.

I'm concerned about the economic viability of our communities. We cannot help but be affected by what happened in Los Angeles recently. You say, "We're transportation people, what did that have to do with us?" It has everything to do with us, because transportation is one of the key urban problems. I'll give an example of this. With the help of the

Department of Transportation, we recently started a vanpooling program. We found there are plenty of jobs for people in the suburban areas if we can get people out of the central cities and into those suburban areas. That is known as reversed commute, and that is the kind of thinking we're going to have to do in transportation.

What are we going to do about the problems of our cities and our inner cities? We're going to have to do some things and transportation must be a component of that action. Federal and state agencies are going to have to allow the metropolitan planning organization to try new planning techniques, new ideas, new ways of doing things. I don't want to warn them that they are going to fail, but I don't know how we get there unless we do try and fail. In most cases, we will have a success rate higher than our failure rate, but nonetheless we'll learn through those mistakes. It's the Edison way of doing things. When asked why he continued to try to create the light bulb after a thousand failed tries, Edison responded, "At least I've found a thousand ways it won't work." That's what we're going to have to do when it comes to metropolitan planning.

When we implement ISTEA, we may have to find a thousand different ways not to do things. The metropolitan planning process will include the following elements: congestion management (it will have to clearly be intermodal), it must consider energy, it will have other management systems besides congestion, it will have right-of-way preservation, it will have land use and development consistency, it will talk about freight movement, and it will have transportation enhancements in it. There are life-cycle costs, non-federally funded projects, social, environmental, economic, and energy effects that will have to be considered. It must look at access to the system and at security in transit. It must look at transit in a totally new light. Those are the elements that are involved in our plan and they are going to be very difficult for the MPO to carry out between now and October 1993.

Let me discuss that planning process for a moment. There are some new concepts in this plan that require some new thinking. First of all, the word is comprehensive cooperative in the past, but the new metropolitan transportation plan (as it relates to ISTEA and the expectations of ISTEA and the expectations of clean air) means we must truly be comprehensive and that gets back to the reference of how much land use affects what we do. We have to be comprehensive in what we do at the metropolitan level. We have got to consider the social, economic, and other effects of this plan, because if we don't, it is also deemed a failure.

There are some new elements in this for the MPO. Energy conservation and non-federal projects have to answer to the MPO plan and must also answer to the urban system plan. Freight movement is a whole new arena. We, at the MPOs, are trying hard to get up-to-speed on freight movement. We have not had the connection to that in the past that we



should have had, but we're moving and we're moving quickly. We have to look into security in transit, which is foreign to us, but we'll work it in. There are some old elements in this plan that have a new approach—the land use development systems. This element is critical and it will have to have a whole new look.

Congestion management, for the metropolitan planning organization, becomes the guiding principle within the metropolitan area. There is some disagreement right now as to what roles will be taken in the metropolitan area—whether the congestion management planning gets larger than the actual metropolitan plan that is called for under ISTEA. My feeling is no, I think congestion management should be part of that. Transit is an old element, but it will have a whole different look.

We've got to look at environmental effects in a different way than we have in the past and, specifically, it's going to relate to clean air. The new consideration in the plan for the metropolitan planning organization is the air-quality conformity and how we're going to fiscally conform to the plan, how we're going to make decisions on a fiscal basis, and the new intermodal considerations that must be involved. MPOs have been like most everybody else—they've been a bit oriented toward highways as the only mode of travel. The MPOs have been somewhat better than most groups on that issue, but we're not nearly as intermodal as we should have been and shall be in the future. We will have to rethink the way we treat intermodal systems.

The plan also has to be balanced. It's going to have to be balanced between modes; it's going to have to be balanced against air quality considerations; it's going to have to be balanced against land use and development considerations; and it's going to have to be balanced against social, economic, and energy effects on our communities. Those four are becoming key elements that direct what we do in the metropolitan planning organization and how we run our urban transportation systems. The people in our urban communities may not know the jargon (they may not know what a CMAQ is) or they may not know what we have to do for air quality, but they do know they have trouble getting to work because of traffic congestion and they do know that when they breathe the air in the city, it is bad. They also know when they cannot use any form of transit to very good ends. We have got to change when we know something is wrong. It's like the feeling we have around the country now, we know something is wrong, but we don't know for sure what it is, but the people are going to look to us to try to fix it.

I think ISTEA is a fantastic piece of legislation if we can only live up to its goals. Funny thing about this plan, it's going to have to be internally consistent. We'll have to look at the metropolitan program and we'll have to make sure that when we push the bowl of Jello over here, it doesn't come out over there. We will have to make sure we do not allow one policy

we make to affect the goals of another policy. Some will argue (and I won't get into that argument) that is exactly what we failed to do in the last 40 years. That is what we failed to look at with our interstate systems and how they affected the total community. In this new plan, we'll have to look at the consistency of what we do and how we affect the other elements as we do it.

Lastly, we've got to have conformity of air quality for those metropolitan areas that do not meet federal air-quality standards. ISTEA, and the Clean Air Act, for our purposes, look like one. It's hard for us to tell the difference. Particularly in the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments' area.

I failed to mention that this Council is four Ohio counties, three Kentucky counties, and one Indiana county, whose area is a moderate non-attainment area. We have all the problems mentioned: the ridership on transit has gone flat, the occupancy rates in vehicles have gone down. We have one of the most successful ridershare programs in Ohio and the country, yet it has had a constant downfall. We also have one of the more successful vanpool programs, but it also has been losing ridership over time. We're trying to boost that back up now.

We've got a real problem ahead of us to meet the deadline of 1996. How in the world are we going to get the air-quality standards in 1996 when we're faced with the increasing number of vehicle-miles traveled, the occupancy rates in vehicles going down, and transit ridership flat? The true answer: I have no idea at this point. I'm not sure how we're going to meet the 1996 deadline. If we don't get some help from reformulated gas or some technology like that, I doubt if we can make it.

We are going to have to really turn to, and get help from, the state and federal government if we're going to meet the environmental goals that we need out of the transportation bill. It may mean (at the federal level) adding policies like taxing free parking, for instance, or tax breaks for using transit. We will have to determine the cost of gas and the taxes in those areas; otherwise, we simply can't do that at the local level, that has to be a federal policy.

The air-quality plan, along with our transportation plan, is going to mean that we'll have to undergo a cultural revolution. And, those of us who are going to try to lead it may get shot before it's over. Some of the public right now think we are trying to exercise "Big Brother" on them by saying that we're going to try to move them out of that single-occupancy vehicle or that we're going to try to move them into another mode of transportation. At the metropolitan planning organization level, we are the ones who get the fire from people who are unhappy with the way the federal or state process may go. We already understand, while they may

only have a vague feeling that something is wrong, that something needs to be different, they may still be unhappy with our plans.

Also, it's going to be difficult for people to give up the subsidy—and that's clearly what it is—that we have provided to the automobile. We have subsidized that particular system we have today and, if we're going to have to change, we're going to have to change the manner in which we subsidize the system. I cannot see how it will work otherwise. The goals of ISTEA are very good and I believe in them. ISTEA is wonderful, but if we don't change the way we subsidize the system, then we won't attain those goals.

In closing, the MPO is trying to figure all this out. We are extremely excited about ISTEA, and scared to death. Our board members are reflecting the same thing as we've been bringing this bill to them over the last nine months and making the changes necessary to conform to it. They have been both excited and fearful and will continue to be so as we make more changes. Because when we try to air-quality conform the transportation improvement program and we try to start making project selections in transportation improvement programs (based on fiscal constraints and air-quality constraints), the heat on the local officials who serve as the MPO board of directors is going to be tremendous. It is going to be very difficult for them, so we have to provide them with all the support we can. In the end, they are going to be the people who will have to face the public with the goals of ISTEA. That person voting at the MPO level will decide how this legislation is going to succeed. It depends on whether or not they can look at the urban area needs and make the kind of hard decisions that are coming.

One comment I have about transit is that not much of the money has been transferred from the highways to transit. But, just wait, because I know (with due respect to the transit people) the sharks are circling out there and they see it. In fact, the major transit administrator in Cincinnati told me that they have been so poor for so long that, now that there may be a possibility for transit to get some new money, they don't know how to act. I think they are beginning to learn how to act and I think more of that money will be transferred to transit in the future. The MPOs must have new representation—must have transit representation—if they don't now! And, they will have to look at environmental, development, and other interests they've never had to deal with before.

We have a particular issue at OKI that will give you an example of what we will be facing. The actual makeup of OKI is such that it's a three-state compact and, because of restrictions in Ohio, it doesn't allow for the Department of Transportation to be a member of its executive committee (which is the controlling board). The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, for instance, wants a voting seat on that executive committee. We respect that desire and we understand it; however, our bylaws and our articles of



agreement in the three states do not allow it. If we allowed Kentucky in, Ohio has a state statute that prohibits the Ohio Department of Transportation from serving on our executive committee. So, how we work fairness into that doctrine is a very difficult principle. We've settled it, we hope, by the executive committee creating a new policy committee that, in fact, will make transportation decisions. Those are the kinds of things that are going on day to day in the metropolitan planning organization as it tries to accommodate all these new players.

As I mentioned, the local official will have an extremely difficult time working within the system and making the kinds of decisions that will be required of him. Is he going to give up his project locally for the good of the urban area? That is a decision he will have to make in the near future. Over the next three years, the local official is going to be in a very difficult position and you need to work with him and support him as strongly as you can to help make it possible for him to make those tough decisions.

Lastly the MPO's are going to have to carry out the responsibilities that the act presumes it will or, in fact, it will be replaced. A new organization will take its place. I think of what Mr. Iococca said in a recent commercial, "You either lead or get out of the way." I think that is what's going to happen with the MPOs. They are either going to lead or get out of the way. After 40 years of complaining by the metropolitan planning organization, this act gives them a lot of responsibility. It anticipates they'll carry out the act, it anticipates they will go forward. It is our test. The MPOs are on the line; they either perform, they will either lead this time around under the responsibilities of what's being asked of them under ISTEA, or they are going to have to get out of the way and get out of the process. It sounds bad, but I happen to think the MPOs are going to accept this role and that they will perform it and they will do their best. As I said, we are excited and scared, but we will accept it and we will do it. Thank you! ■